

COLLOQUY

*Webster's Dictionary defines colloquy as mutual discourse. Readers are encouraged to submit additions, corrections, and comments about earlier articles appearing in **Word Ways**. Comments received at least one month prior to publication of an issue will appear in that issue.*

Philip Cohen believes that "The Ultimate Synonym Group" is one of the very worst pieces Borgmann ever wrote, a paradigm of how not to do logology:

1. It does not consist of genuine synonyms that can be used interchangeably: as an example, alopecia (hairlessness from falling out of hair) is not the same as shornness (hairlessness from cutting off of hair).
2. It has no guiding principles: as an example, if unrestrained trichomania and trichorrhexomania unchecked are accepted, why not also unchecked trichomania? Such combinations will yield thousands of trivial and meaningless variants.
3. It is intellectually lazy: he merrily invents phrases no one before him ever wrote, said, or even thought, while ignoring genuine entries such as hairlessness (actually found in dictionaries)
4. It is dishonest: many of the entries are not in the dictionaries he cites. Generally this is obvious (as in the ultimate haircut) but sometimes it is not (alopecia capitis totalis), complicating the task of anyone extracting a legitimate synonym group.

The editor believes that Borgmann wrote this with tongue in cheek as a satire on pedantic research. Philip Cohen concedes the possibility, but is less sure, given the fact that other Borgmann articles often exhibited a no-holds-barred attitude toward unearthing logological specimens (see, for example, his transpositions of AEGINRST in the August–November 1976 **Word Ways**, or his chemical element name transpositions in the August 1978 issue). It's very difficult (perhaps impossible) to parody one's own literary faults.

The editor believes that Dmitri's bombast and braggadocio was designed to conceal a basically shy man, reluctant to meet people face to face. Evidence for this is scanty, but suggestive. As noted in February 1985, no logologist ever met him in person. When the editor proposed a meeting in the summer of 1979 on a vacation trip to Washington, Dmitri quickly invented reasons not to do so. Another logologist – Prince Djoli Kansil, as I recall – told me a story of arranging to meet Dmitri at his Oak Park, Illinois home, but found no one there when he arrived for the visit. (He waited half an hour or so, then gave up.) One can speculate that as a Nazi refugee he found boyhood in the American heartland somewhat try-

ing, and built his somewhat overbearing intellectual persona as a defense mechanism.

David Shulman notes that Edward Wolpow's "Pneumonoultramicrostuff" in November 1986 perpetuates the incorrect belief that Frank Scully coined the nonce-word in his 1936 book, Bedside Manna. As noted in the May 1985 Word Ways, the word was mentioned in the New York Herald Tribune on February 23, 1985, having been used at the winter convention of the National Puzzlers' League by Everett Smith, an editor of the Christian Science Monitor.

In Borgmann's "Cryptograms on the Prowl" Jeremy Morse notes that the verbal noun TETHERINGS might be preferred to INHERITETH. And how about HEIGHTENED for 18, and FROWSTY for 40?

Rather than add two letters to each number-name and rearrange, why not see how many letters must be added before a dictionary word can be anagrammed out of the resultant stockpile? Jeremy Morse supplies many examples: heterogeneity (31), thyrotoxicosis (36), hypersensitivity (37), interchangeability (39), confectionery (41), polytetrafluorethylene (43), affectionately (51), inefficiently (59), extensionally (61), heterosexuality (63), exsanguinity (69), weighty (80), homogeneity (81), intently (90), conveniently (91), inconveniently (99). What is the shortest dictionary transaddition for each number-name? What is the first number-name that does not have a dictionary transaddition (twenty-one?)?

Even more interesting, Jeremy Morse notes that INTERCHANGEABILITY includes 10 different number-names: 3, 8, 9, 10, 30, 39, 80, 89, 90, and 98. Are there any words with more? Finally, how many words can be found that are transpositions of two or more number-names, with no letters left over (FORTUNE one four, TEETHING eight ten, EXTENSIVELY eleven sixty, EXTENSION one six ten)? There is much scope for computer investigations of transadded number-names.

Laurence Urdang takes Dmitri Borgmann to task for ignoring two articles by Robert Fowlkes on Irish Bulls in Verbatim in May 1975 and November 1976. The Word Wurcher thinks that some of Dmitri's bulls are not really bulls: dumb speaker (have you ever listened to a presidential campaign speech?), I was a fine child but those who brought me up changed me (perhaps he fell into the hands of comprachios), the Papist boasts he is a Roman Catholic (this is a third party's report - who would call himself Papist? - and hence may be quite accurate).

Errata: The Gale book Allusions was not a reissue but a new edition. On page 22, the quotation is "Der Herrgott ist raffiniert, aber boshaft ist Er nicht" and cincona should have been ciconia.

"How to argue with a dead man? I cannot" writes Reinhold Aman, noting that Dmitri Borgmann would have been pleased by the fact that these two sentences contain 22 and 7 letters respectively. He points out that Dmitri's wish for a source listing news agencies such as TASS has been answered: The Editor & Publisher Interna-

tional Yearbook (1986), Section 7, pp. 55-59. Alternatively, one can bust one's eyeballs scanning the 90,000 entries in Gale's two-volume work on international acronyms, initialisms, and abbreviations.

Philip Cohen footnotes Darryl Francis's "An Investigation of ACEIN-ORST" in the August 1981 issue with ESTARCION, the name of the fantasy world of Cerebus (the most popular of the small-press comic books).

George Scheetz asks: will the real consonym stand up? In November 1979, Philip Cohen in Kickshaws defined a consonym as a word which has the same consonants in order as another word, phonemically speaking (eczema and gizmo), with AEIOU vowels. In May 1986, Will Shortz in Kickshaws constructed consonyms alphabetic consonyms (eTHNiC and THeNCe), a practice also followed by Dana Richards in November 1986 (although he also allowed Y as a vowel, calling these permissive consonyms). Purists, it would seem, have a need to distinguish between phonemic and alphabetic consonyms; the former have a higher level of difficulty, but the latter appear to be more popular. Shouldn't one always consider Y a consonant?

The Word Wurcher notes that another 29 entry (the first missing one in A Dictionary of Numerical Allusions) is the California place-name Twentynine Palms, in the Mojave desert.

Philip Cohen wonders where Dmitri Borgmann got the numbers 102 and 114 in his demonstrations that Eckler and Dmitri can be numerically converted to 666, the number of the beast; "with arbitrary numbers like these, any name in the world can probably be [anti-Christianized] in a few minutes." The Word Wurcher notes that 666 is representable by six different letters commonly used by the Romans: DCLXVI. What about the seventh letter, M? In early Roman notation, it was represented in the form M , a combination of two of the other letters. Thus, he says, the number of the beast impinges on everyone, since everyone's number must partake of these parts. "I leave the discussion of any implications to theologians and others more subtle than I."

Culver City resident James Novack's Panaventure [sic] Corporation offers LetterDial, a vanity telephone number service. For \$15 (\$25 for businesses), he will run your seven-digit telephone number through the computer for possible words or phrases.

The September 7, 1986 issue of the Los Angeles Times reviews Lawrence Levine's 31,594-word palindromic novel (described in the August 1986 Word Ways): "We defy any reader to try to read more than a few pages of the output, but we salute Levine for his chutzpah in tackling the project. The world needs more Levines - playful eccentrics determined to scale the heights where no one has gone before, even if getting there isn't much of an accomplishment."